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How to Raise a Bullfrog—A Further Update with Information on a Possible Albert Broel Manuscript

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Tracing the history of an industry where obscure publications and ephemera predominate is difficult. Such is the case when documenting the history of frog farming in North America. Historians assemble as much material as possible before publishing their findings, but there is always the possibility of finding new information that had been unknown or unattainable previously. In this note, I present updated information on a publication mentioned in Dodd and Jennings (2021) that we had not been able to locate, report on another frog raising brochure, add a note on Albert Broel's (American Frog Canning Company, New Orleans) 1945 frog-raising manual, and discuss a manuscript that might be an original outline for Broel's system of giant bullfrog culture.

In Dodd and Jennings (2021), we noted a publication on frog farming published in 1975 by the Quaestor Publishing Company of Rochester, New York. We had been unable to find a copy of either the long or the short version, and we attributed the author as anonymous. I recently obtained a copy of the shorter version (30 p). Although Quaestor was the publisher and promoter (Fig. 1), the author was John Bravenec Jr. (3 October 1933 – 10 September 2006). The brochures sold for $14.95 each, with the seller receiving $8.95 in return for distributing them. The brochures contain mostly typescript basic information, followed by four figures showing layouts for various types of breeding operations. John Bravenec was a Brethren minister in Seaton, Texas, for most of his life. How he became interested in frogs is unknown, but his obituary noted that he and his brothers were well-known in their younger days for their bullfrogging adventures. Brevenec's obituary is at: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/16001130/john_jerry_bravenec (accessed 4 November 2024).

Lesters Bullfrogs Rana Catesbeiana. This short brochure (Fig. 2, 12 p.) was published by Dozier Lester (28 December 1928 – 3 May 2015) of Duson, Louisiana. The brochure is undated, but a letter in my possession seeking a partner for Lester's "Frog Feeding Apparatus" is dated 23 March 1980 (Fig. 3), and a licensing form for this invention is dated 10 May 1977. These dates suggest a late 1970s publication date. The brochure is entirely in text and there are no illustrations of Lester's feeding apparatus. His obituary states that "Dozier had a passion for raising bullfrogs and was known to many as the "frog man." Dozier began raising frogs in the spring of 1972 and gave up his small business in the fall of 2013. One of the highlights during his frog raising years was being chosen as the Grand Marshall of the Rayne Frog Festival in September of 2005. He supplied the Frog Festival with all the frogs they needed for many years. One of Mr. Lester's many accomplishments was the design and patent of the "frog feeder." In July 1982, Lester was awarded a patent for his bullfrog food mixture consisting of fish meal, ground crawfish hulls, ground limestone, two sodium compositions, water, and horsehair; the horsehair was to stimulate swallowing. Lester raised bullfrogs in his backyard and sold them commercially and for scientific research. A story about him was published in the 14 March 2007 issue of *The Independent* (https://theind.com/articles/64/; accessed 4 November 2024). Lester's obituary is at: https://www.burtonfuneralhome.net/obituary/3097741 (accessed 4 November 2024).

Frog Raising, Broel System, 1945. As noted in Dodd and Jennings (2021), there were two editions of this publication, 1943 and 1945. Although we only illustrated the 1943 edition (p. 87), the 1945 edition has a cover of a different color with slightly different wording (Fig. 4). The text is identical to the 1943 edition, as are the black and white photographs. However, the photographs are placed in different places within the 1945 manual, and the last photo in the 1943 edition, depicting a racist photo and caption of a small black boy, is replaced by a photo of a clean-cut white boy holding a bullfrog.

Broel Manuscript. In mid-2024, I obtained a copy of a hand-written manuscript, written in a black copy book (19.5 x 24 cm; Fig. 5 A–F), of the *Broel System of Giant Bullfrog Culture*. The manuscript covers the first 16 lessons of the Broel system, plus the supplements on Vegetation (No. 1) and Before Breeders Arrive (No. 2) (see titles in Dodd and Jennings, 2021). Although unpaginated, there are 122 pages of meticulously single-spaced text in a cursive hand-writing, liberally supplemented by drawings from the various lessons. The text is not a perfect copy of the lessons, but much of it is word-for-word from them. The manuscript apparently was not written at one sitting, as various colored inks were used. There is very little crossing-out or editing, suggesting that whoever wrote it might have been copying from another

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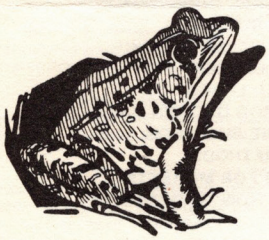
QUAESTOR PUBLISHING COMPANY
2680 WEST RIDGE ROAD --- SUITE 106
POST OFFICE BOX 2787
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14626

(716) 225-8576

$20,000 PER YEAR POSSIBLE RAISING BULLFROGS

THANK YOU for the interest that you have shown and for the time that you have invested to answer my ad offering information on the exciting and tremendous income potential in raising bullfrogs!

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTS:



(1) Only ONE mature female bullfrog can produce from 15,000 to 25,000 eggs in a single year. Therefore, from each mature female bullfrog, you can obtain a minimum of 15,000 bullfrog eggs per year! You can allow as many or as few of these eggs to mature as you select. You will be pleased to learn that
(2) A full grown bullfrog can bring as much as $2.00 or more when sold! That's right! Your full grown bullfrogs can command a price of $2.00 or more!
(3) You can raise up to 20,000 bullfrogs on a single acre of land! Just think of the potential! Up to 20,000 bullfrogs on a single acre of land and each of them worth at least $2.00 each! What a tremendous money-making opportunity!!

TO EXPLAIN THIS TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY, we contacted a professional bullfrog breeder with many years of practical experience. He has spent a good portion of his life working with bullfrogs and earning nice sums of money by raising and selling them. This professional bullfrog breeder has written a most valuable instructional manual on the subject of raising bullfrogs. By following the instructions in this manual, you should be able to earn as much as $5,000 or more per acre per year by raising bullfrogs! This wonderful manual,"How To Raise Bullfrogs For Fantastic Profits", also discusses a method of raising bullfrogs that can bring in as much as $24,000 or more per year! Equally startling is the fact that you may be able to raise these bullfrogs on a part of your land that otherwise may be quite useless to you!

EVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A FULL ACRE OF LAND, you could still earn as much as $1,000 or more per year with a backyard-type operation of only 66 feet by 66 feet! If further limited spacewise, you can still raise over 100 pounds of clean, delicious meat each year on a small hobby-backyard operation of only 20 feet by 30 feet! If you presently have no land at all, this manual will show you ways to acquire the land needed for your frog raising operation at very little cost to you! And even if you live in a restricted city neighborhood, this manual will show you how to raise a "pet-hobby" backyard operation of 50 to 60 bullfrogs in a space not much larger than a normal bath-tub without violating city or neighborhood restrictions! Even this minimal type of operation will pay or save you many times the modest cost of this manual!

BULLFROGS, although becoming very scarce, may be found in the wild in a range that extends from southern Canada through Mexico. They have been successfully introduced to Hawaii, Japan and Puerto Rico. Therefore, you should be able to raise bullfrogs anywhere in the United States (except Alaska). Moreover, the manual discusses a special technique that speeds up the growth of bullfrogs! This technique should help bullfrog raisers in the cooler climates to gain many of the ideal natural climate advantages of the southern states!

COPYRIGHT 1976
QUAESTOR PUBLISHING COMPANY

Fig. 1. First page of Quaestor Publishing promotional brochure accompanying *How to Raise Bullfrogs for Fantastic Profits.*

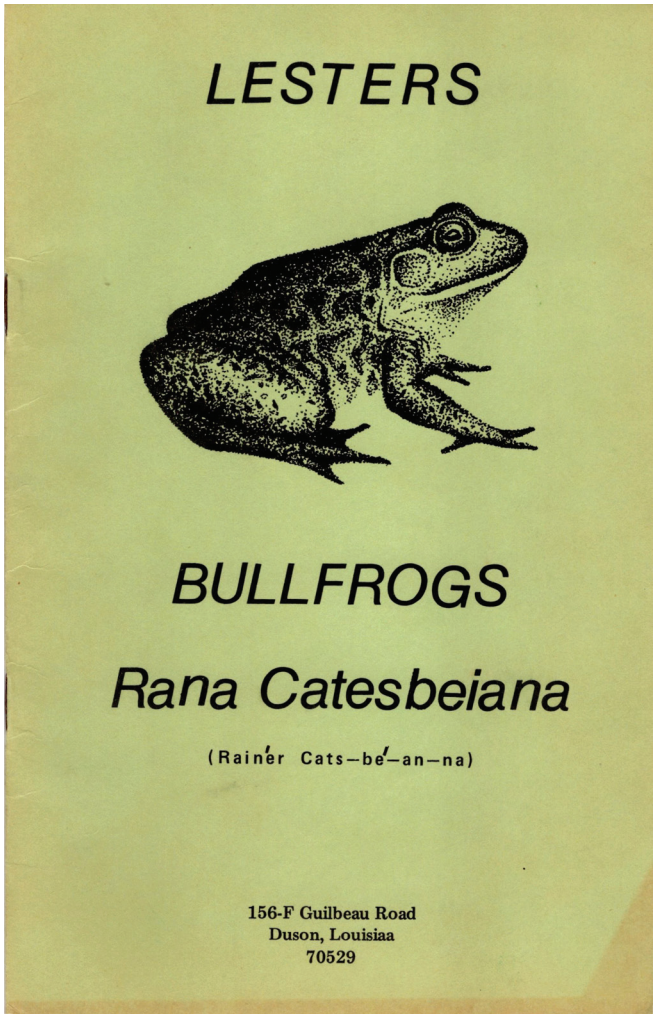
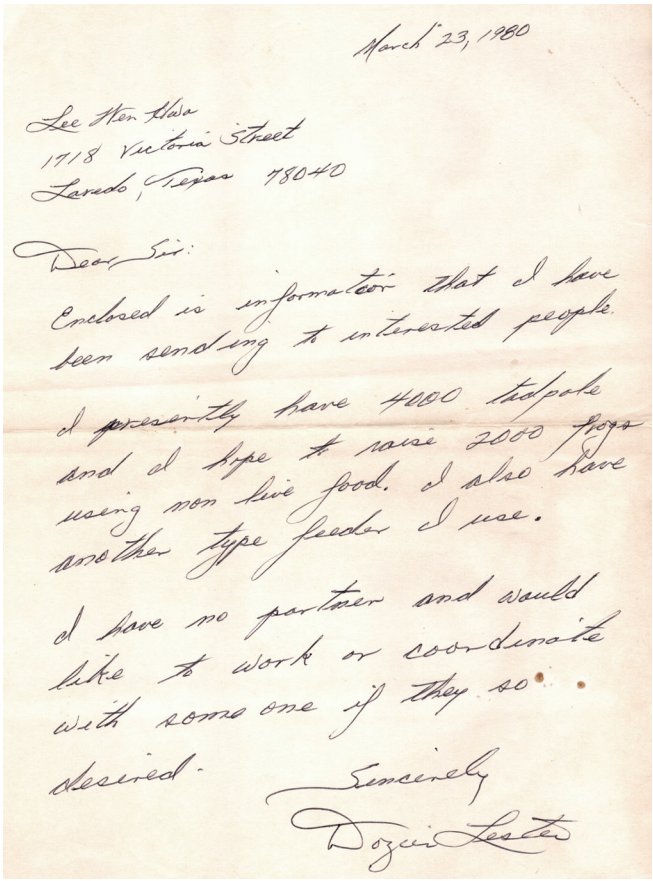


Fig. 2. *Lesters Bullfrogs Rana Catesbeiana*. Cover. Undated.

source. A tissue paper outline of the frog appearing on the cover of Broel (1943) was inserted in the book.

The style of the copybook is consistent with one from the 1930s, but who wrote or copied this manuscript? Unfortunately, no owner, author or date is included in the book. At the very end of the book, there is a stamp "M. Plum, Newark, New Jersey." M. Plum was a publishing company that specialized in printing pamphlets and booklets. M. Plum could have produced the copybook, or it could have been the publisher of Broel's "System" lessons; a publisher is not listed on any of the lesson instruction booklets, which were mass-produced. Albert Broel could have sent the copybook to M. Plum to let the publisher know what might be included in a final version, but it is impossible to be certain without supportive documentation. The seller of this manuscript had no idea of its provenance.

Is it possible to trace the handwriting? Little is available to compare the handwriting of the manuscript with known copies of Albert Broel's writing (and that, just of his signature). I have examined Broel's signature on letters and his WWI and WWII draft cards. The "A"s are clearly


March 23, 1980

Lee Wen Hua
1918 Victoria Street
Laredo, Texas 78040

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is information that I have been sending to interested people.

I presently have 4000 tadpole and I hope to raise 2000 frogs using non live food. I also have another type feeder I use.

I have no partner and would like to work or coordinate with some one if they so desired.

Sincerely
Dozier Lester

Fig. 3. Letter from Dozier Lester to Lee Wen Hua, 23 March 1980.

different, but the rest of the letters in "Broel" match very closely with the way they are written in the manuscript (Fig. 6). The copybook manuscript could be a "good draft." It certainly took a great deal of effort to write the text and draw the illustrations, but it may be impossible to ascertain the author or the reason for putting the text nearly word for word in a notebook. Although the manuscript could have been written by Broel, perhaps the manuscript in this copybook was simply an effort by a want-to-be frog farmer to avoid paying the cost of the Broel System lessons during the Great Depression (at $47.0 - $57.50, the total cost for all lessons was expensive in scarce Depression-era funds). It should be noted, however, that Albert Broel copyrighted his lessons and a warning against infringing on the copyright is printed on the back of each lesson booklet. Additional information on the lessons and the subsequent controversy surrounding them is in Dodd and Jennings (2021).

Acknowledgements

I thank Mark Jennings for supplying copies of Albert Broel's WWI and WWII draft registration cards and for his thoughts on the origin and authorship of the text.

References

Bravenec, Jr., John J. 1975. *How to Raise Bullfrogs for Fantastic Profits. A Complete Instruction Manual*. Quaestor Publishing Company, Rochester, New York. 30 p.

Broel, Albert. 1943. *Frog Raising*. Marlboro House, Detroit. 164 p. Spiral Bound. [*Broel System* does not appear on the front cover]

Broel, Albert. 1945. *Frog Raising*. Marlboro House, Detroit. 164 p. Spiral Bound. [*Broel System* appears on the front cover, but not on the title page]

Dodd, C. Kenneth., Jr., and Mark .R. Jennings. 2021. How to raise a bullfrog—The literature on frog farming in North America. *Bibliotheca Herpetologica* 15(8):77–100.

Lester, Dozier. Undated. *Lesters Bullfrogs. Rana catesbeiana. (Rainér Cats–bé–an–na)*. Dunson, Louisiaa (sic). Unpaginated (12 p.). [Lester's first name does not appear in the booklet]

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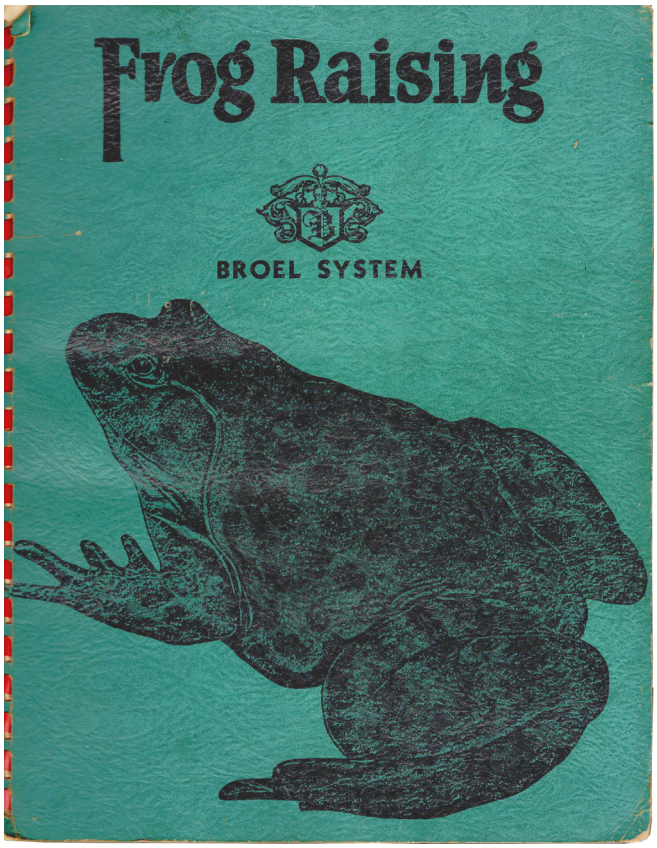

Fig. 4. *Frog Raising, Broel System*. 1945. Cover.

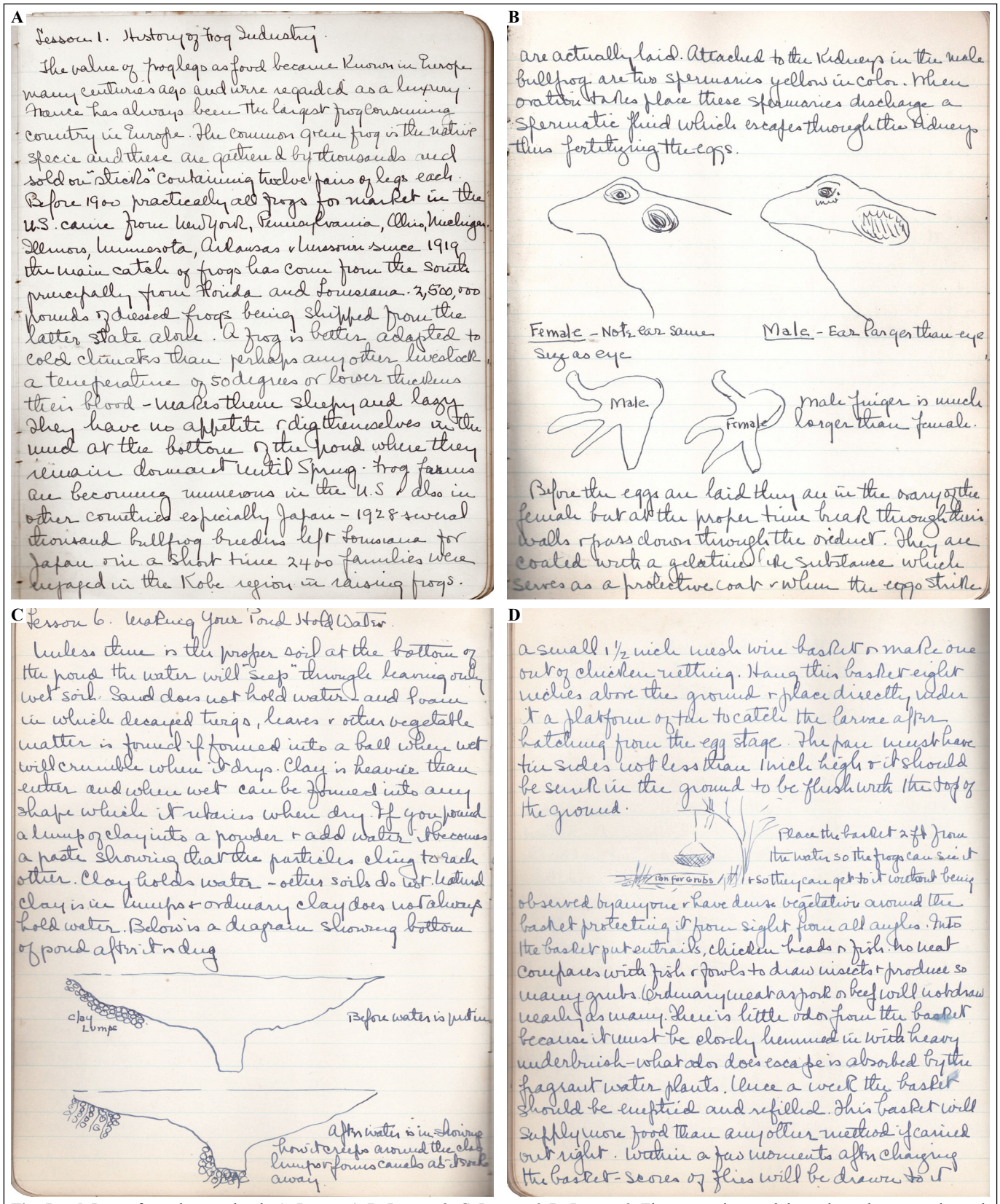
A
Lesson 1. History of Frog Industry.
B
Female - Note ear same size as eye
Male - Ear larger than eye
Male
Female
male finger is much larger than female.
C
Lesson 6. Making Your Pond Hold Water.
Clay Lumps
Before water is put in
after water is in showing how it creeps around the clay lumps or forms canals & soaks away
D
Place the basket 2 ft from the water so the frogs can see it & so they can get to it without being observed by anyone & have dense vegetation around the basket protecting it from sight from all angles.

Fig. 5 a–d. Pages from the copybook. A. Lesson 1; B. Lesson 3; C. Lesson 6; D. Lesson 9. Figures are inserted throughout the text and match those in the printed lessons.

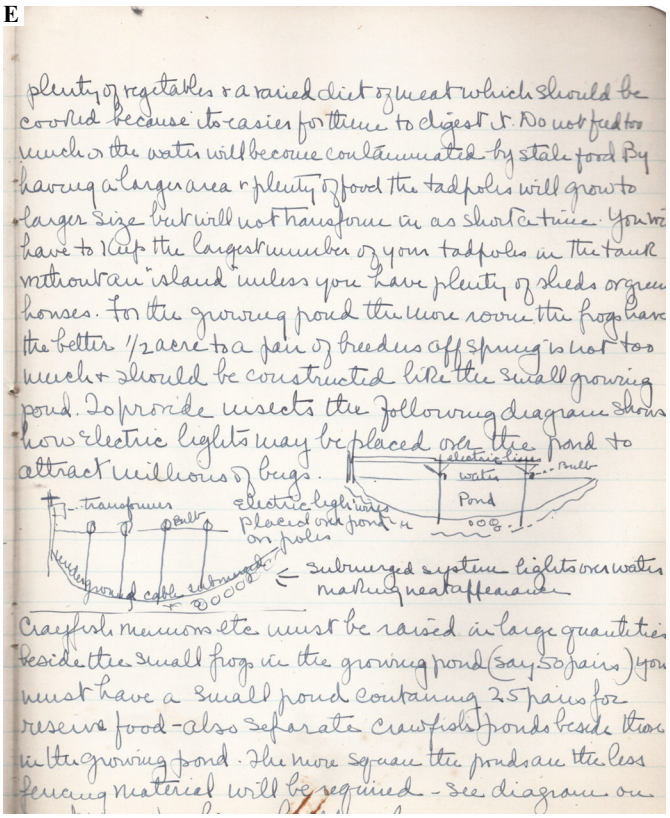
E
plenty of vegetables & a varied diet of meat which should be
cooked because its easier for them to digest it. Do not feed too
much or the water will become contaminated by stale food By
having a larger area & plenty of food the tadpoles will grow to
a larger size but will not transform in as short a time. You will
have to keep the largest number of your tadpoles in the tank
with rain water as they will not transform in as short a time. You will
have to keep the largest number of your tadpoles in the tank
without rain water unless you have plenty of sheds or green
houses. For the growing pond the more room the frogs have
the better 1/2 acre to a pair of breeders off spring is not too
much & should be constructed like the small growing
pond. To provide insects the following diagram shows
how electric lights may be placed over the pond to
attract millions of bugs.
transformer
electric light wires placed over pond on poles
Pond
water
cable
submerged system lights over water making near appearance
Crawfish minnows etc must be raised in large quantities
Beside the small frogs in the growing pond (say 50 pairs) you
must have a small pond containing 25 pairs for
reserve food - also separate crawfish ponds beside those
in the growing pond. The more square the ponds are the less
fencing material will be required - See diagram on
F
notified & bad order report enclosed. Liberate the frogs
in the pond as quickly as possible & if you have a long distance
to take them in your car keep ice on the box to keep them
quiet otherwise they may injure themselves & the females
lose their eggs. Crawfish, minnows & tadpoles are the best
food for the breeders. Do not use an electric light bulb
in your pond until the frogs are accustomed to their
new home. Do not handle the breeders more than necessary
& for the first weeks observe them while concealed.
If you notice a frog drooping its head & acting listless
pick it up & feel its stomach which is empty. This frog
is not sick merely hungry & weak. Sentiment
with handling or strange surroundings affects some
frogs. All you do is to put a crawfish or minnow in his
mouth every day until he hops away when you come
near. When force feeding crawfish break off their pinchers
because they will injure the frog's mouth. When eaten
naturally the frogs know how to manage them. Do
not hesitate to write us for any information or
advice we will be glad to help.
American Frog Canning Company
3800 Jefferson Highway
New Orleans
La.

Fig. 5 e–f. Pages from the copybook. E. Lesson 15; F. last page in the copybook. Figures are inserted throughout the text and match those in the printed lessons.

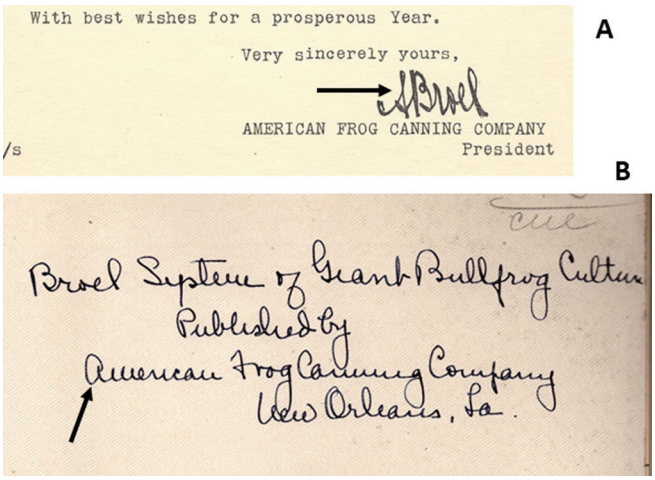

Fig. 6. Comparison of handwriting. A. Albert Broel's signature from a 1937 letter to a customer. B. Handwriting on the inside cover of the copybook possibly written by Broel. The "A"s are quite different between the "A" in the signature and the cursive "A" in the text, but the letters in "Broel" are very similar in both the signature and throughout the text of the copybook.